

Special Issue

On The Concepts of Practice, Theory, Cognition and Rationality

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Abstract

This article gives Prof. Zhiyong Dong's own definitions to the concepts of practice, theory, cognition, rationality.

1. Introduction

This volume should have only talked about the subjective thinking of humans. However, it has to begin from the objective practice of humans, because there could not be any human thinking without any human practice. Kant had the similar viewpoint on the same issue. "This is the course which our human reason", Kant said "by its nature, leads all of us, even the least reflective, to adopt, though not everyone continues to pursue it. It begins not with concepts, but with common experience, and thus bases itself on something actually existing". (Note 1) However, it is a pity that Kant never chained the human beings themselves as the "something actually existing". The aim for the human beings to carry on the subjective thinking is first for doing their objective practice better, though there are many moments, that is, many factors of subjectivity and objectivity, between the individual thinking and the individual objective practice.

The concept of practice became an important concept in philosophy since the ancient Greek time. For instance, Aristotle mentioned the concept of practice. He connected the concept of "practical" with the concept of "comprehension". (Note 2) Karl Marx paid much attention to the concept of practice. He even called himself "a practical materialist, that is, a communist". (Note 3) Then the concept of practice became one of the basest concepts in Marxist philosophy. Mao Zedong, one of the ex-leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, also paid much attention to the concept of practice. He wrote the book *On Practice*, centering on the relations between practice and theories.

The distribution of the concepts of practice and rational activities are almost the same in today's circle of philosophy in China. That is to say, the meanings or senses of the concepts of practice and rational activities are almost the same, in today's circle of philosophy in China. However, Mao Zedong stressed

the sememe, that is, the sense, that the subjective initiative, which is contained in the concept of practice, in his book *On Practice*. This viewpoint of his is more accord with the characteristics of the rational activities of human beings. And the political and economical systems, which have been regulated and made by the Communist Party of China, with the guidance of Mao Zedong's thought, stress the factor of human conscious activities. And the concept of practice is much more convenient in constructing new words than that of the concept of rational activities, from the law of the Chinese word-building or word-forming. For instance, we can say teaching practice, but not the rational activities in teaching, in the Chinese word-building. It is because practice is a word, but the rational activities is a phrase. It is quite easy for the word with another word to build a new word in modifying construction. While the rational activities in teaching is a phrase in Chinese word-building. It is very difficult to put another word before the phrase of the rational activities in teaching to construct a new phrase, such as "the teaching rational activities". It would bring the difficulty of grammar and logic in the Chinese expression, and the problem of being obstructed of the sentence in the Chinese language. It not in accord of the principle of Chinese language that the word and sentence should be the simpler, the better, if we did in this way. Therefore, in today's China, people usually use the concept of practice to refer to the concept of rational activities, and to use the concept of rational activities is quite seldom and exceptional.

However, different scholars have got different definitions, including different intention and extension, of the concept of practice until nowadays, that is to say, different scholars have got different viewpoints about what is practice. Therefore, some Chinese scholars even to appeal for saving the concept of practice the sooner the better. Therefore, I think that we would better to begin our discuss from the issue of defining properly the contemporary concept of practice.

2. Two Arrangements of the Ideas of Induction

I think, to define the contemporary concept of practice properly is actually requiring us to refine the current concept of practice from perspective of dialectical induction. The so-called dialectical induction is the way, or the method, or the form for people to sum up or put any object, anything, any law, etc., into a nutshell, or a simpler object, or a simpler thing, or a simpler law, etc., during the process of cogitating, or describing, or grasping any object, or anything, or any law, or any event, etc., in order to make the concrete cognition fuse with, or melt into, or blend with the whole system of the knowledge of a language community, like that of China or that of Britain, etc., which a person himself is in, and make the concrete cognition be understood, acknowledged, grasped, remembered, passed on, and succeeded by the person himself and the other members of the language community.

Induction has been one of the most basic and most important way and method in the process for humans to cogitate, describe and grasp the objective world and subjective world since the most ancient time. However, there are at least two arrangements or two levels of ideas about induction. And we have not got to know or describe the two arrangements or levels clearly till now. The first is that to sum up

or put simply any object, anything, any law, any event, etc., as an existent form of a more simple object, or a simpler thing, or a simpler law, etc., but not to point out the differentia, or special difference of an object, or a thing, or an event. For instance, to sum up or put natural or man-made disasters to the wills or desires of heaven, or the personal lot, or the objective laws, but not pointing out the concrete reason of each disaster. Another example is to say that water is a kind of matter, but not to point out the concrete material construction of water, etc. They are the examples for people to define any matter or thing with a low level of induction. The high level for people to define any matter or thing or event with the way or method of induction is to define the matter or thing with its genus, or abstract end, or essence, and the differentia, or special difference, or concrete end. For instance, it is the way of defining water with its genus or essence and the differentia, or special difference, if we say that water is a molecule composed with two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. We call this kind of way or method of defining things or matters as dialectic induction.

The reason for us to call dialectic induction as the high level of induction is that we have to make clear and grasp the deference and relations between an object and the other relevant things beforehand. For instance, when we make a dialectic induction of water, we must make clear what are molecular, atom, oxygen atom, hydrogen atom, and how many oxygen atoms which a water molecule contains, and how many hydrogen atoms which a water molecule contains, etc., beforehand. However, it is not easy to make clear about these things. It need humans to have got very high level of scientific research. It is a low level of the rational cognition and understanding when humans have the abstract concept about a kind or category of things and can call it with a word or a phrase, according to the rules or regulations of formal logic. For instance, the ancient Chinese people had got the abstract concept of water more than three thousand years ago, because there was the letter of water in the system of inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of Shang Dynasty (16th-11th century B.C.) in the Chinese history. It indicates that ancient Chinese people had had the concept of water at the level of rational abstraction and the ancient Chinese people could distinguish water from other things or matters at the level of concept. The ancient Egyptians would had had the rational knowledge about water much earlier, because the ancient Egyptian civilization merged much earlier, and water is one of the most basic element to keep humans alive. However, it is until 19th century that humans finally to get to know that water is the chemical compound of hydrogen and oxygen, molecule is the genus, or abstract end, or essence of water, water is the existent form, or subordinate concept of a molecule, and a molecule contains two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. It is till then that humans had got the high level of cognition and knowledge of water and the definition of water with genus and differentia or difference, according to the rules and regulations of formal logic. Before that, humans always state and explain what is water by illustrating rain water, river water, lake water, well water and sea water, etc. It is a definition of illustrating according to the formal logic. From the perspective of induction and dialectic logic, it is a low level of cognition and knowledge when humans can only define water by illustrating the existent forms of water. It indicates that the human knowledge about water is at a low level. Only humans can define

water by pointing out the genus, or abstract end, or essence, and the differentia or specific difference, that humans have got the higher level of cognition and knowledge of water.

Humans, of course, cannot cast off or break away from the low level of using the method of induction, during the process of deepen their cognition and knowledge about objective world and subjective world. It is because that it indicates that humans have already got know that there are some differences between one thing and the other things when they use the low level of the method of reduction. It is the starting point for humans to deepen their cognition and knowledge about the objective world and the subjective world, and make their cognition and knowledge be able to draw close to the definition with genus and specific difference of a matter or a thing or an event. It had no way to do the definition with genus and specific difference, if without the low level of using the method of induction. Furthermore, each generation has to repeat the process of defining each concept from the low level of illustrating to define each object with genus and difference. It is because that each individual begins his course of living from his childhood. Each parent educates his offspring about what is water by illustrating river water, well water, rain water, etc., which can be easily seen in their everyday life. And at the same time, each individual of each generation tests and verifies each knowledge which the old generation have got to know with a certain method or from a certain perspective. It is the typical case for the younger generations to tests and verifies each knowledge which the old generation have got to know when the pupils and students to have many kinds of courses of experiments and practice in primary and middle schools and universities.

3. Criterion of Demarcating the Extension of the Concept of Practice

The disputes and controversy about demarcating the concept of practice were focused on the different criteria of demarcating the extension of the concept of practice more than ten years ago in China. For instance, some scholars published one article after another to oppose to expand the usage of the concept of practice, pointing out that scientific research, teaching, or art activities were not the existent forms of practice. Their criteria of demarcating the extension of the concept of practice are much narrower than that of Mao Zedong, who died in 1976, and *The Basic Requirement For The Students Of Ordinary Universities*, published by the Ministry of Education of P. R. China in 2003.

I think that we should resolve first the issue of the criteria during the process of demarcating the extension of the concept of practice. Only the extensions accord with the intention that the demarcations is the correct demarcations according to the rules of formal logic. However, we have to face the situation that people have been changing their usage of the concept of practice greatly since the ancient Greek till now, when we demarcate the extension of the concept of practice.

However, we should follow or comply with the criterion that we should change our criterion according to the change of the scope of the contemporary social usage. It is because that it is the criterion for all the disciplines to demarcate any concept when people demarcate the scope of the usage of a concept or word. For instance, the word *gunning* in Chinese referred to the sisters of father in the Yuan Dynasty

(1271-1368) and Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in Chinese history, that is, the aunt, or the kinsfolk of elder generation. However, it referred to girls and daughters, that is, the younger generation, from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in Chinese history. Then our contemporary linguists have demarcated the extension and the scope of the usage of the word *guniang* in Chinese language by explaining the meaning of the word *guniang* as the younger generation in contemporary Chinese dictionaries. Another example is that Adam Smith ruled out fresh water from the ranks of commodities clearly and definitely, "Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarce anything; scarce anything can be had in exchange for it." (Note 4) However, today's relevant communities, companies and economists have to put the fresh water into the rank of commodities according to the practical situation of the usage of the fresh water. People have to pay for their usage of fresh water in the most populated areas, even many rural areas in today's China. It is because no matter to use the fresh water produced by other people, or to purchase the bottled water, it needs labor and to purchase the other productive means, which have got the form of commodities, such as drilling and drawing equipment, chloride, city water pipe, bottles, etc.

We have to follow or comply with the criterion that we, as the persons of doing research and teaching philosophy, should change our criterion according to the change of the scope of the social usages, in the process of demarcating the extension of the concept of practice. Let alone the persons, who are doing the other activities, will call their activities as living practice, art practice, teaching practice, scientific research practice continually, no matter we call them practice or not. We, as the persons of doing research and teaching philosophy, should only summarize and abstract them according to their real usages of concept at present, but not against the contemporary reality. Therefore, it is the only correct attitude and way of disposing the problems of demarcating the extension of the concept of practice to coincide the extension of the concept of practice with the special way of humans' living, as what has been done by *The Basic Requirement For The Students Of Ordinary Universities*, published by the Ministry of Education of P. R. China in 2003.

4. Practice and Rational Activities

We must get to know the three states of the affairs of the antagonist or antitheses in the course of demarcating the extension of the contemporary concept of practice. The so-called state of the affairs of the antagonist or antithesis refers to the state that we put two or more things or concepts, which are different, but also have connections, together to consider in our mind. I think that we can recognize that practice is the only way for us to identify the human cognition with the objective world, and practice is the only bridge for humans to straighten out the humans' cognition with the objective world.

The first antithesis is that the antithesis between the concept of practice and its genus, or the abstract end, that is, the antithesis between the practice and the other activities of humans, and the antithesis between the practice and the activities of the other animals. The aim for us to set up the antithesis is to understand the specific characteristics or differentia of practice. That is, to get to know why we only

call some of human activities as practice, but never call the other activities of humans or any activities of the other animals as practice. This is actually to explain the reasons why we only call some of human activities as rational activities, but never call the other activities of humans or any activities of the other animals as rational activities.

We need first to demarcate the human activities into two categories according to the characteristics of all kinds of human activities. The first are the activities of the rationality, that is, the activities under the guidance of certain theories or consciousness. These kinds of activities are the conscious activities of humans. The existent forms of these kinds of activities include labor, consumption, amusement, entertainment, marriage, etc. The second is the unconscious activities of humans, such as turning over in sleep, a baby's sucking the breast, the crying of a baby, a baby's walking haltingly, the paroxysm or coming on of some disease, like mental disease, etc. We can call the first category of human activities as practice or rational activities, for they are the specific activities of humans. Only this kind of activities are the basic reason for humans to surpass the other animals, and for humans to become the king and soul among all the species of the animals. It accords with the objective usage of the concept of practice, at least in China, when we call these kinds of activities as practice. As for the second kind of activities, such as turning over in sleep, the paroxysm or coming on of some disease, like mental disease, etc., we can only call them as the instinctive activities of animals without any difference from the activities of the other animals, in this context. And these sorts of activities are not the direct reason for human to surpass the other animals.

We have to explain clearly the reason why we can call some of human activities as the activities under the control of consciousness or certain viewpoints of theories, and never call the activities of the other animals as the activities under the control of consciousness or certain viewpoints of theories, in the circumstances that we humans cannot do any direct intercourse of subjectivity between humans and the other animals. That is to say, we have to explain clearly what is consciousness, what is theory, what are rational activities, what is rationality, etc.

I believe that the reason why we can call some of human activities as the activities under the control of consciousness or certain viewpoints of theories is that the humans can confine their activities by more factors, or from more aspects. In other words, the differentia or basic difference of human activities is that the humans can confine their activities by more factors, from more perspectives or aspects.

We have to examine carefully the different characteristics between humans and the other animals, in order to prove the above proposition.

As we know, everybody of each species of animals has to take some activities of its limbs and trunk on its initiative to get rid of its natural animals and to get food, water, habitat, etc., which are necessary for them to keep alive, and to keep their sexual partners to keep the reproduction and multiplication of the species. Both of the humans' activities of their limbs and trunks and the activities of the other animals' limbs and trunks have the same function.

However, the ways and patterns of humans in doing the above activities' such as get food, water, etc.,

are quite different from that of the other animals. Firstly, in the activities of obtaining food and other essential living materials and in the process of avoiding natural enemies, the other animals, with the exception of a few kinds of animals, achieve their ends by totally depending on the strength of their own bodies. African lions pursue and kill herbivores with the physical strength of their own bodies. They can only make use of their environment as it is, i.e., they make use of the given environment as they find it. They cannot make use of the attributes of the objects, i.e., the relationship between the objects. For example, sheep can feed themselves only with grass and grain which is already growing there or left by human beings. They can never plant any grass or grain. African lions can feed themselves only with the herbivores already living there. They can never go to the trouble of domesticating livestock.

Many mammals and birds can make lairs or nests with hay, leaves or twigs. These sorts of activities involve two moments or two factors in one action, as they gather the above materials not for their own comfort, but for their descendants. Still this kind of activity involves many fewer determinable factors in one action than those of human beings. The most advanced animals in today's world, other than the human beings, are chimpanzees and gorillas. Gorillas often use stones, sticks, etc., as tools while engaged in the activity of obtaining food. But their use of tools involves only two moments, i.e., two determinable factors, in one action. One is the search for the tool, such as the suitable stone or stick as it is and as they find it. They might even change the shape of the stone or stick with the physical force of their own bodies. The other is keeping and using the stone or stick as a tool in achieving their ends, such as breaking hard nuts, and so on.

Unlike those of the other animals, the activities of human beings in obtaining food and other life-maintaining materials, while avoiding any dangerous circumstances, are much more complicated. In order to attain their final goal, the human beings can make use of many characteristics and attributes of the objective world around them by making use of tools, machines, fuels, etc., apart from the physical force of their own bodies and the objects around themselves.

However, what should be pointed out here is that in the process of assimilating more factors in their actions, human activities are regulated, limited, restricted and determined by many more factors. In other words, in the process of making use of many characteristics and attributes of the objective world around them, human activities involve many more factors than those of the other animals. For instance, in harvesting grain on a modern and technologically advanced farm in the United States, what the farmer does usually is to drive a combine harvester. His action in harvesting involves not only the exertion of the physical force of his living body according to the regulations on how to drive the combine harvester, but also a technologically very complicated up-to-date combine harvester, which is in good condition and has the necessary fuel. The combine harvester and fuel in turn involve many more relevant factors and processes, such as the assembling of the combine harvester, the making of the various parts of the combine harvester, and so on. These involve in turn the production of the steel and the other relevant materials, which in turn involves almost the whole industrial system at large,

such as electricity generation, computer manufacture, coal production, the transportation of the above necessary machines and the production of the vehicles necessary for their production, the building of the relevant roads and railways, and so on and so forth. Therefore, the effects on grain production brought about by the combine harvester driver are not only those of that particular driver's exertion of the physical force of his own living body, but also those of the other relevant players and the attributes and characteristics of a lot of relevant materials, such as the hardness of steel, the elasticity of rubber tyres, the heat discharged from combustion fuel, etc.

Certainly, in the early stages of human history, the human activities involved in acquiring life-supporting materials and individual and communal defence were much simpler and involved far fewer factors than today. Still, their activities with regard to maintenance and defense were much more complicated than those of the other contemporaneous animals. It is little wonder, therefore, that many archaeologists and historians have associated tool-making with the emergence and development of human life and labor, believing that the making of tools clearly involves more factors than just making use of stones or sticks as tools in the activities of obtaining food and common defense, from nine tenth century.

Many previous prominent scholars have pointed the above facts actually. I just want to stress here that we should abstract and summarize, from the above facts, that human beings use more defining factors to their activities, during the process of making use of the attributes and properties of the objects around the humans, that is, making use of the relations of the objects around the humans, and fusing many relative factors with their activities.

Therefore, the qualitative difference between the activities of human beings and those of the other animals stems from the quantitative difference in the number of factors involved in regulating and determining their own activities. The difference in quality comes from the difference in quantity. The change in quality comes from the change in quantity.

In the other category of activities, that is, in the activities involved in establishing and maintaining relations with their fellow animals among the same species or among the same community, those of human beings involve many more factors in a single action than those of the other animals.

In establishing the membership of a community, in ants, bees, elephants, monkeys, even in gorillas and chimpanzees, the only factor involved is sexual, consanguinity and blood relationship. In human beings, besides the sexual and blood relationship, economic and political characteristics play a more decisive role. Human beings have a much more complex system of social hierarchies in a community, which never appears in other animal species. In other words, the human characteristic of performing multi-moment activities is demonstrated by the way in which human beings establish many more relationships among themselves than any other animal. These relationships or factors, which determine and regulate the activities of each human individual, are another expression of the multi-moment activities engaged in by human beings.

In the fields of consumption, amusement and entertainment, humans also use more defining factors to

restrict, confine and refine their activities. For example, humans have made more limits or confines in the issue of having meals and sleeps everyday to their own activities. Humans have to consider not only the issue of if there are any food can be eaten, but also the issue of if a specific person has the right to eat the specific food or not, if the place is right to eat or not, if the tableware is suitable or not, if the posture, bearing and appearance is right or not, etc. He would be called a thief or a robber and be condemned and denounced by the morality of the community in which he lives, or even be punished by the laws, if he did not paid for the food he eats or gets back to his home. A person in stardom would serve as one of the chat over a cup of tea or after a meal immediately, if he ate a corn while strolling around the streets, and even photoed by the other people and were connected with the internet. It is the same in the issue of sleeping. The humans have not slept whenever they saw a bed or a place since very ancient times. In the primary times, the places which are near the fire hollow were usually preserved for the old members of the household. You have to pay for making refreshment in a hotel or an inn today. Every bed is usually arranged to a specific person to lie or sleep in a family or a university house. The other person is usually not allowed to lie or sleep when he meets any bed.

In the activities of procuring and maintaining a reciprocal sexual partnership, human beings restrict, confine and refine their activities with more factors. In the case of the other animals, the bodily characteristics of the different individuals in the same species, such as the body size, body colour, body strength, body dexterity, whether the body is in oestrus, etc., is the only factor or moment which determines the results of the activities. But in human beings, procuring and maintaining a sexual partner involves many more factors or moments besides the bodily characteristics. These extra factors include the sexual partner's wealth, personality, social position, family relation, etc., especially the taboo against the sexual partnership of two individuals of close consanguinity, that is, the taboo against incest. The taboo against incest is another key factor which encouraged human beings to break away from and transcend the mechanistically reductive animal *Lebenswelt*. (Note 5)

Of course, different scholars, who work in different disciplines, have different viewpoints on the above issue. For instance, Feisheng Ye, the contemporary linguist of China and his colleagues, in their book *Outline of Linguistics*, believes that what made humans break away from and transcend the mechanistically reductive animal *Lebenswelt* is that "languages...is the last and most important symbol and sign which indicate the separation of the humans from the other species of the animals". (Note 6) However, I think that the viewpoints of the scholars, like Junsheng Cai and the other scholars of all over the world, who study the ancient humans and ethnology, are correct and more convincing, by considering the phenomena and historical facts that both the males and the females are cursed and abused as "not humans" and incest among the folks in contemporary China, and the contemporary Chinese constitutions regulate that the persons who have relations of blood within three generations cannot marry, and the females, even the males would be punished most severely, if they violated the taboo against incest in the early histories of all human communities, and no one thinks or says that the deaf-mute were not humans.

The book by Feisheng Ye *et al.* reported that “A branch of man began to have language about 50000 years ago, according to latest research”. (Note 7) But the evidence about the age of the emergence of languages is much higher in inference, guesswork and conjecture than that of the human skeleton, because the oral languages have the character that it would disappear after it is spoken, and the most ancient written language appeared only about 5200 years ago in Egypt. Besides, we have to acknowledge that the viewpoints of Junsheng Cai and the other scholars of all over the world, who study the ancient humans and ethnology, are correct and more convincing, by considering the phenomena and historical facts that the proportion of disabled babies and mental disorder is very high if the old generation are close relatives of blood or close kindred.

In establishing the membership of a community in ants, bees, elephants, monkeys, even in gorillas and chimpanzees, the only factor involved is sexual, consanguinity and blood relationship. In human beings, besides the sexual and blood relationship, economic and political characteristics play a more decisive role. Human beings have a much more complex system of social hierarchies in a community, which never appears in any other animal species. In other words, the nature, differentia, or specific difference of human activities, which have made humans super or surpass the other animals, is demonstrated by the way in which human beings establish many more relationships among themselves than any other animals.

Though we human beings do not know if there is thinking among any other animals, because we still have no way to have direct intercourse of thoughts, we do know that our activities are defined and refined by more factors than that of the other animals, and we humans can directly observe, survey and understand this phenomenon. Therefore, the qualitative difference between the activities of human beings and those of the other animals stems from the quantitative difference in the number of factors involved in regulating and determining their own activities. The difference in quality comes from the difference in quantity. The change in quality comes from the change in quantity. The scientific and correct description of G. W. F. Hegel about the relationship between quality and quantity is really the sharp weapon for us to find and recognize the qualitative difference between the activities of human beings and those of the other animals. He said in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* that “if the quantity present in measure exceeds a certain limit, the quality corresponding to it is also put in abeyance.” (Note 8)

Therefore, the so-called human’s practice or rational activities are actually that humans can refine and define their activities with more factors or moments.

Kant’s definition does make people be unable to make ahead on the issue of the differentia between humans and the other animals. “In the first part of our transcendental logic”, Kant says, “we treated the understanding as being the faculty of rules; reason we shall here distinguish from understanding by entitling it the *faculty of principles*.” (Note 9)

I once called human’s practice or rational activities as mufti-moment activities, in my book *Absolute Value And The Concept Of Human Rights* (Note 10) in order to be convenient to measure the quantity

of abstract labour. However, I do it just for the convenience of the measurement of the quantity of abstract labour. It is just like that we can call a cat as “a cat”, “a male cat”, “a Felidac animal”, “a carnivorous animal”, “a mammal”, “a vertebrate”, “a chordate”, “a living being”, “a thing”, and, etc. All these addresses are right and suitable, so long as we do not set up any context or premise when we call it. Hegel put forward once that “it is true that a man is nothing but the series of action”. (Note 11) This is a viewpoint which is quite inspiring. However, it is a pity that Hegel did not point out the difference between the human series of action and that of the other animals like wolves, bears, tigers, or leopard, etc.

What should be pointed out here is that we have united the human consciousness and its results together, that is, the human consciousness and practice together, and take the control and guidance of consciousness as the differentia of practice, when we connect the difference of practice with the other human actions and the activities of the other animals, and answer the question of what is the differentia of practice after all.

Hegel put forward the viewpoints, in his book *The Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science*, that the same thing or same event can be in the state of being in-and-for-itself, actually referring to the human practice, that is, the human body's activities under the control and guidance of human consciousness. The other things and activities of the other animals can be only in the state of being in-itself. The third state is being for-itself. This state refers to the state that the humans have some cognition or some correct cognition.

5. Practice, Consciousness, Cognition, Theory, Rationality

The second state of antithesis for practice to be in is the antithesis between practice and consciousness or theories. This issue that we have to resolve is that how humans develop their theories and practice by themselves, when we make consciousness or theories and practice to be in the state of antithesis. The aim for us to make this antithesis is to get to know the inner differences of the rational activities of humans, and make people know the truth that humans have to develop their theories, if they want to develop their practice.

We have to make another category of the human activities, which is the most immediate genus of practice. We have to classify the human activities into the two categories, one is the activities of limbs and trunk, another is the activities of spirit. The activities of limbs and trunk have to be classified into a sub-categories, one is the instinct reflection of animals, another is the activities under the control and guidance of consciousness or theories of humans. The instinct reflection of the animals include the baby's getting milk, baby's cry, baby's walking haltingly, humans' turning over in sleep, etc. The activities under the control and guidance of consciousness of humans include the tool-making with tools, setting up and maintaining social relations, etc.

The activities of spirit of humans can also be classified into two moments, one is sense perception, another is thinking.

The human activities of limbs and trunk themselves and the results of human activities of limbs and trunk can be felt directly by the other human individuals and the sense organs of many kinds of the other animals. For instance, the human walking, running, speaking, writing, singing, casting amorous glances, making eyes, hoeing, driving a vehicle, getting married, giving birth to a baby, baby's sucking milk, crying, turning the body in sleep, and all kinds of the articles which are manufactured or made by humans, etc., may be sensed or felt directly by the other human individuals and the sense organs of many kinds of the other animals. But all kinds of activities of human spirit cannot be sensed or felt directly by the other human individuals and the sense organs of any kind of the other animals until now, except the activities of spirit made by the person who makes the activities himself.

However, the activities of human spirit can be expressed objectively and materially by the activities of human bodies, such as the activities of human limbs and trunk, written languages, oral languages, and make the activities of human spirit be the objects to perceive, and making them be sensed or felt directly by the other human individuals. And then they can be understood by other individuals of human beings through the process of the thinking of the other individuals. For instance, my thinking and cognition on the concept of practice can be expressed by my written languages, oral languages, and making the other individuals to sense or felt directly. And through the process of thinking, the other human individuals can make them understand and grasp what I mean. The English version of *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* calls this process "understanding". The English version of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* also calls this process "understanding".

The results of humans' activities of spirit, which have been expressed objectively and materially, and which have not been expressed objectively and materially, often be called as the human consciousness. The concrete existent forms of human consciousness, that is, their sub-concepts or extensions, are the expressing regulations of languages, concepts, judgments, propositions, theses, emotions, feelings, sentiments, theories, social policies, plans, schemes, etc. And today's human societies have classed the results of humans' activities of spirit into the categories of political thoughts, legal thoughts, ethics, theologies, art, philosophies, natural sciences, linguistics, and the managements which only connected with the relations of quantity, and, etc.

When we set the consciousness antagonistic against the practice, then the practice refers to the activities of living bodies of human beings under control of linguistic regulations, concepts, judgments, propositions, theses, emotions, feelings, sentiments, theories, social policies, plans, schemes, etc. The human practice always needs the control and guidance of certain theories or cognition. This proposition can be proved by the historical phenomena that different levels of theories can guide out the practices that have got different levels of development.

It is a common historical phenomena that the human practices have got different levels of development. For example, a traditional farmer, in the Qing dynasty three hundred years ago in the Chinese history, could produce at most tens of tons of wheat each year with the traditional farming tools, such as sickles, plough, farm cattle, etc. While a contemporary modern farmer can produce thousands of tons of wheat.

A farming enterprise in Heilongjiang Province of China imported 20 sets of cultivators with super-horsepower in the year of 2003. Each set could cultivate 4000 hectares of farmland. The productive power of these cultivators was much higher than that of the cultivators used before by the farmers of the enterprise. Each farmer, who operated the new sort of cultivators, could cultivate a much bigger area of farmland in a given period of time, such as an hour or a workday, etc., and correspondingly produced much more grains, such as wheat or bean, etc., in a production cycle, than he had been able to before. The immediate reason for a contemporary modern farmer, in Heilongjiang Province of China, has got such a high level practice, much higher than a traditional farmer, is that the contemporary modern farmer can drive one set of the cultivators with super-horsepower and can make use of the proper fuel. The reason for today's human beings to be able to produce the cultivators with super-horsepower and the proper fuel is that today's human beings have got higher degrees of cognition, theories and consciousness about the natural phenomena and the natural laws, such as the state of affairs about the resources of petroleum, and the cognition and technology about how to recover and process petroleum, etc., than that of the traditional farmers. Therefore, high level practice comes from high level of cognition, theories, consciousness, and, etc.

The concept of rationality is an abstraction of the humans' rational activities. The reason for people to do the abstraction is that people have to think out another thinking moment, in order to quantify the rational activities, that is the practice, and judge the level of the rational activities or practice. It is because that the human beings have to go into another thinking moment, and it will be more convenient to use another term to express it, if they want to judge the level of the rational activities. That is to say, the two concepts of rational activity and rationality are connected, but different, and the corresponding language expressions should be also different. It is just like the hot discussion about the two concepts of modernization and modernity. These two concepts are also connected, but different. Modernization refers to the connection of community or a thing with the most advanced culture of the contemporary world, when we make the two concepts antagonistic against each other, that is make them connected, but different. While modernity refers to the degree of the connection with the most advanced culture of the contemporary world. We can say that it has got a strong modernity, if it has got a close connection. It has got a weak modernity, if it has not got a close connection. It has got no modernity, if it has not got any connection at all. Therefore, modernity is a thinking moment, which is different from modernization, when we judge the degree of the connection of a community or a thing with the most advanced culture of the contemporary world.

It is the same with the two concepts of rational activities and rationality when we make the two concepts antagonistic against each other, that is, to make rational activities and rationality connected, but different. Rational activities refers to the simple fact that the human individuals' activities are confined and refined by more factors or regulations than the other animals, when we make the two concepts antagonistic against each other, that is make them connected, but different. While rationality refers to the numbers of factors or regulations which confined and refine the humans' activities. We

can say that an action is in a high level action of rationality, if it has got more factors or regulations to refine or confine. It is a low level of rational action, if it has got less or fewer factors or regulations to refine or confine. It has got no rationality or just animal instinct, if it has not got more factors or regulations to refine or confine. The more factors or regulations to refine or confine the relevant activities, the higher level of rationality the relevant activities have got in.

We have often seen that the concept of practice was made antagonistic against the concepts of thinking, or against the concepts of theories, or cognition in the past. It is quite normal and understandable for us to see such phenomena. It is because that humans can make use this ability in our minds beforehand, that is, we humans can define and refine our bodies' activities with more factors and regulations only in our mind beforehand, but do not undertake the actions temporarily. That is to separate temporarily the humans' spiritual activities from the physical activities of their bodies. These spiritual activities or concepts have been named by humans ourselves as thinking, cognition, plan, and, etc., which have got similar meanings.

What should be pointed out here is that the concept of thinking sometime is referred to process of the reasoning, or logic inferring, or imagination of the individuals of human beings. The immediate aim of these thinking may not be to refine or define the activities, which may be undertaken immediately, or in the near future, but only to raise the level of their thinking, or just to meet their curiosities, or just for the amusement or a rest of their mind. However, the concept of thinking can only refers to the process of refining and defining the activities of the human bodies with more factors and regulations in our mind beforehand, when we set the concept of thinking antagonistic against the concept of practice, or concept of rationality, when we make concept of thinking as the context of using the concept of practice. It is because we have added a moment more, or a refining factor more, the concept of thinking can only refers to the process of refining and defining the activities of the bodies of human beings with more factors and regulations in our mind beforehand. And correspondingly, the concept of practice can only refers to the human bodies' movements.

It stresses the results of human thinking, especially the results which have been expressed objectively and materially by oral or written languages, when we make the concept of theory and similar concepts, such as language regulations, social regulations, policies, plans, etc., antagonistic or the context of usage against the concept of practice. "The theory transcends the experiences", Hegel said once, "it invents and makes the concepts which can not seen in experiences on one hand, and on the other hand, it make use of the thinking stipulations and thinking regulations. Thus the theories make themselves become the objects of logic critiques through the two ways mentioned above." (Note 12) His above words stresses that theories connects with practices, but themselves are the results of human thinking which cannot be sensed or perceived directly by human sense organs.

The concept of cognition sometime refers only to the process of thinking. For instance, Mao Zedong mentioned the concept of the stage of rational cognition in his book *On Practice*. The concept of cognition refers to the process of sensation or perception sometime too. For example, Mao Zedong

mentioned the concept of the stage of sensation or perception in his article *On Practice*. The concept of cognition sometimes refers to the results of thinking, that is, the concepts, judgment, propositions, theses, theories, language regulations, social regulations, policies, plans, etc., which have been thought out or created, in contemporary Chinese language. For instance, Mao Zedong put forward the proposition that “the leap from the rational cognition to the revolutionary practice” (Note 13) in his article *On Practice*. The concept of cognition refers to the results of thinking in this proposition. What the concept of cognition refers to has to be dependent on the context in contemporary Chinese language. What we should pay attention here is that Mao Zedong put forward clearly the viewpoint in his article *On Practice* that the process of humans’ sensation and perception happens in the process of humans’ practice. The viewpoint is quite right. It because that we humans can initiate to get to know the information we need and complete the process of the sensation and perception in the process of practice, that is, through the moment of the activities under the guidance of the humans’ consciousness, such as directional survey, directional investigation, experiments, and, etc., in the common situation. However, we can find a phenomenon that may make people feel puzzled and perplexed. The phenomenon is that the human practice, which happened in the real history, cannot be carried out without the cognition, because the human practice cannot be carried out without the control of human consciousness. Meanwhile, the human cognition, which happened in the real history, cannot be carried out without the human practice, just like what is stated above, that is, human beings can only complete the process of the sensation and perception, and get to know the information we need on humans’ own initiative in the process of practice in the common situation. That is to say, the humans’ practice includes or contains the moment of human cognition. This is the historical facts and bases for all the great thinkers in the past to have put forward the viewpoints that practice have the function of guidance for cognition, and that the correct cognition and thoughts can guide people to have successful practice, etc.

Then, is it possible for people not to be able to distinguish the two moments or two phenomena of practice and cognition, in humans’ real social life, in the circumstances that the practice and cognition are concluded and contained mutually?

I think that people can really distinguish the two moments or two phenomena of practice and cognition clearly in their real social life. It is because that the practice after all refers to the activities of human bodies, which can be sensed and perceived directly by the sense organs of other individuals, and the immediate genus of the practice is the activities of human bodies, when we set the practice and cognition as two opposite concepts, that is, when we take the two concepts as different and separated, but connected. While the cognition refers to the human spiritual activities and the subjective disposals after all, and the immediate genus of the cognition is the human spiritual activities and the subjective disposals, which cannot sensed and perceived directly by the sense organs of other individuals. We can say that if there is characteristics of perception, that is, if it can be perceived and sensed by other individuals, is the key and criterion for us to distinguish the two types and two moments of human activities, after we have resolved the issue of the different qualities of human activities and that of the

other animals. In other words, practice refers to the activities of humans' bodies, which have been refined and confined by many factors, which are known by humans themselves, when we make the practice antagonistic to cognition. It is because we have got rid of the moment of cognition from the moment of practice when we make the practice antagonistic to cognition, from the perspective of dialectics and reductionism.

We can now have a brief discuss on the arguments about the extensions of the concept of practice, which was one of focused topics in the discipline of the philosophy in China about twenty years ago.

The focus of the arguments is that if we should embrace the scientific research, teaching, and arts, etc., which need more mental labour or spirit activities as the extensions of the concept of practice.

I think, the scientific research, teaching, and arts, etc., of course, should be included as the extensions of the concept of practice, though these kinds of activities need more mental activities. When people do these kinds of activities, it need people to move their physical bodies, or parts of their bodies as well, not only the pure activities of their mind.

The immediate aim for people to do scientific research, teaching, and arts, etc., may not change or exploit any physical object, but to change the subjective world of humans to raise the level of the structure of humans' knowledge and humans' cognition on the nature, or the contemporary state of human society, or the laws of the historical development of the nature and human society, and to raise the level of the abilities of humans to change and exploit objective world indirectly. However, the humans' activities above, that is, scientific research, teaching, and arts, etc., are connected with the bodily activities of humans. They have to use their hands in consulting the relevant documentary data before the researchers to do any experiment. They have to use their hands to write the papers and reports after they have finished their experiments. Most of them have to use their hands and bodies to operate the experiment instruments, even to invent and make the relevant experiment instruments themselves. The teachers have to make use of their mouth to give the lectures and to make use of their hands to operate the relevant teaching instruments. The artists in the fields of sculpture have to use their hands to make the carves. The painters have to make use of their hands to hold the pens to paint. The play and music writers have to use their hands to write or type their works, etc. It could not change the cognition of the other people in many circumstances if anyone only thought, though the immediate aim of his thinking was to change the cognition of the other people and even himself. Only through the moment of humans' bodily activities that the subjects can have impacts on objects, that is, on the other people or the subjects themselves, and change the objects to an extent, and make the subjects get know how much effects their plans or the results of the thinking are in line or accord with the objective reality. And it can raise the level of cognition themselves and the other people. Therefore, it is right, correct and to accord with the subjective logic to include the scientific research, teaching, the innovation of arts, etc., as the extensions of humans' practice.

6. Existential Forms of Practice

The third antithesis, which the concept of practice is in, is that to take the concept of practice as a genus, and set it against its existent forms and extensions, such as make it oppose against productions, the activities which deal with the social relations of human societies, scientific researches, consumption, human marriages, etc.

I think the aim for humans to make the antitheses, or opposite relations, or antagonism, is that humans would like to simplify the process of their thinking through the method which would like to summarize all kinds of conscious activities and take all the conscious activities of humans as a whole. It is because that humans sometimes need take all the conscious activities of humans as a whole, when humans deal with the relations between the theories and the humans' conscious activities in order to simplify and make clear the process of individual thinking.

It is a common phenomenon in the process of human thinking for people to set or make some abstract concepts or thinking moments relatively more abstract, in order to simplify and make clear the process of human thinking. It is because that the memory and thinking abilities of each individual of humans are quite limited compared with the objects which may become the objects of human thinking. For instance, we have to take millions of all kinds of plants as a whole, and have to create the parallel and opposite concepts, or thinking moments, of plant, such as animal and mineral, etc., when we tackle or research the phenomenon, or the function, or the mechanism of photosynthesis of plants. Another example is that we need to put forward or create the four concepts or thinking moments of vertebrate, terrestrial animal, aquatic animal, and fish, which are more abstract than human and shark, when we search and tell the difference and connection between the humans and the sharks, and when we have to further tell the contents of the above four concepts, so that we can tell clearly the difference and connection between the humans and the sharks, that is, that both the humans and sharks are vertebrate, but the humans are terrestrial animals, which breath with lungs, while the sharks are aquatic animal, which breath with gills, and, etc. Certainly, we have to leave out the facts that a few aquatic animals breath with lungs, such as cetacean, dolphins, etc., which is the clumsy statement in this context.

The above state of affairs shows that the concept of practice has the duration, that is, has the double functions in the process of human thinking. Sometimes the concept refers to the bodily activities. Sometimes it only refers to a thinking moment of humans. This is the key for the discipline of philosophy not to be able to explain clearly what is the concept of practice, or rational activities, until now.

Of course, many concepts, which were put forward by humans, reflect many objective facts and phenomena, and which are not dependent on the subjective disposition of humans. But these objective facts and phenomena have to be undergone through the moment of the subjective disposition. These objective facts and phenomena can become some concepts and categories, which can reflect the objective facts and phenomena, but are not the objective facts and phenomena themselves. The objective facts and phenomena are the objective facts and phenomena. Concepts and categories are concepts and categories. They are two different things, though they are linked together. And humans

have quite a freedom in the process of disposing these objective facts and phenomena. For instance, the contemporary Chinese language call the human conscious activities, which have been confined and refined by many factors, as *Shijian*, while the English people call it practice in English language. Another examples is that we sometimes call the tigers as tigers, sometimes as animals, sometimes as vertebrate, sometimes mammals, sometimes carnivore, and etc. All these calls are correct and in accord with the historical facts, and can be understood by the people of the relevant community. These are the cases that human can dispose, freely to an extent in humans' subjectivity, the objective objects and phenomena, which exist without our thinking or subjective disposition. It is also the expression and manifestation that the human individual can abstract the humans' conscious activities, freely to an extent in human subjectivity, as different concepts with different degrees of abstraction, according to human different need in their practice and thinking. The real history of humans' activities in the process of their cogitating and remaking shows, that only by the abilities and the facts that humans can dispose the objective world freely to an extent in humans' subjectivity, that humans can continually deepen their cognition on the objective phenomena and facts, which exist without humans' thinking or subjective disposition.

What should be pointed out here is that the three antitheses or antagonists explained in detail above are the necessary moments of humans' thinking when humans deal with the connection between the concept of practice and the other subjective concepts of humans, and then connect and link the objective activities of the subjects of humans with the whole objective environment, in which humans live, though the three antitheses and antagonists explained in detail above are set and formed by the humans in the process of their own thinking themselves. Or in other words, humans reflect the relations between their activities and the whole objective environment, in which humans live, through the above three antitheses and antagonists. Only having a relatively deep understanding and comprehending this can we grasp the intention and extensions of the contemporary concept of practice correctly and the social functions which the contemporary concept of practice play and make the people, who work in the field of philosophy, cast off or break away from the awkward position that they cannot tell what is the concept of practice, or rational activities, until now.

Notes

Note 1. Immanuel Kant's Critique Of Pure Reason, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929, pp. 495-496, A 584, B 612.

Note 2. The Complete Works of Aristotle, the revised Oxford translation, ed. By Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, 1984, 1143a25-1143b5.

Note 3. The Selected Works of Karl Marx And F. Engels, vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, p. 75 [in Chinese].

Note 4. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Books I-III, Penguin Group, reprinted, 1986, p. 132.

Note 5. See also Jun-sheng Cai, Formation of Human Society and Primitive Society, Peking: China

Social Science Press, 1988, pp. 183-212.

Note 6. Feisheng Ye et al., and revised by Hongjun Wang et al., Outline of Linguistics, the forth edition, Peking: Peking University Press, 2010, p. 38.

Note 7. *ibid*, p. 161.

Note 8. G. W. F. Hegel, Hegel's Logic, trans. by William Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 160 , §109.

Note 9. Immanuel Kant's Critique Of Pure Reason, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929, p. 301, A 299, B 356.

Note 10. Dong Zhiyong, Absolute Value and the Concept of Human Rights, p. 23, (monograph), self-publication, ISBN: 978-981-11-3863-8, registered in Singapore, available for sale in www.amazon.co.uk. For more detailed can be contacted with Prof. DONG Zhiyong, dongzy@nwu.edu.cn

Note 11. G. W. F. Hegel, Hegel's Logic, trans. by William Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 199, §140.

Note 12. G. W. F. Hegel, The Logic, translated by Yizhi Yang, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1966, vol. 2, p. 392. [in Chinese]

Note 13. Mao Zedong, On Practice, Selected Works of Mao Zedong, vol, 1, Peking: People's Publishing House, 1952, p. 281.